



REMEMBERING AND REFLECTING

on Sep. 11, 2001
in the Classroom

RECOMMENDED FOR GRADES 6-12

Council on American-Islamic Relations
453 New Jersey Ave. S.E. Washington, D.C. 20003
Tele 202-488-8787 Fax 202-488-0833
E-mail: info@cair.com URL www.cair.com

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Dear School District Leaders:

On behalf of our entire civil rights organization, we pray that you, your staff and your students are doing well and staying safe in these trying times for our nation.

As you may know, CAIR is our nation's largest Muslim civil rights organization. Our mission is to enhance the public's understanding of Islam, protect civil rights, promote justice, and empower American Muslims, of all ages. Every year, CAIR dedicates much of its time to addressing Islamophobia in school settings, including peer-to-peer bullying and Islamophobic content in school curriculum.

Preliminary research has [demonstrated](#) that Muslims face bullying at twice the rate of the national average and most Muslim children report that they often do not feel safe approaching their teachers or school administrators about the issue. This is a problem across the nation, including in diverse school districts.

In 2019, Muslim students across California [reported](#) to the CAIR-California chapter that nearly 40% of them were bullied at school for identifying or being perceived as Muslim. CAIR-Massachusetts conducted a survey of 200 Muslim students and [discovered](#) that 60% of respondents reported being mocked, verbally harassed, or physically abused for being Muslim. 33% of [respondents](#) had altered their appearance, behavior, or names to hide the fact that they are Muslim.

CAIR National's 2021 Report, *Resilience in the Face of Hate*, [documented](#) 114 school related incidents ranging from bullying, Islamophobic school curriculum, and holiday denials. Of those incidents, bullying accounted for 44% of all school-related complaints.

As we approach the twentieth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, we hope and expect that schools across the national will remember and reflect on this tragic day in our nation's history. Teaching students about September 11th, 2001 and its impact on our nation and people around the world is of critical importance, especially on the twentieth anniversary of the attack.

It is just as important to educate students in an accurate way using reliable sources. Although most schools teach students about 9/11 in an appropriate way, our civil rights organization usually receives a spike in complaints from students and families around the anniversary of 9/11. Some complaints involve peer-to-peer bullying, while others involve anti-Muslim content in lesson plans. In some instances, schools have used educational materials about 9/11 created by anti-Muslim hate groups.

With this in mind, we write to share information that your school district can use to protect Muslim students from bullying, ensure that your lesson plans about the 9/11 attacks are accurate and reliably sourced, and educate students about the impact that 9/11 had on all Americans, including American Muslims. These resources are intended for grades 6-12.

Please see the enclosed documents for additional information. Thank you for your service. Please feel free to reach out to us, your local CAIR chapter or local mosque directly if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Huzaifa Shahbaz
Research & Advocacy Coordinator
Council on American-Islamic Relations
Washington, DC

Best Practices When Discussing Sep. 11, 2001 Attacks

To mitigate the risk of sparking anti-Muslim bigotry in the classroom, we recommend the following best practices when discussing Sep. 11, 2001:

1. Alert students a few days in advance of the 9/11 lesson plan so that families have time to prepare their children for the discussion.
2. Use external instructional materials – such as photographs, documentaries, etc. – from vetted, reliable, mainstream sources such as museums and major media outlets.
3. Vet all materials, including internal materials such as textbooks, to ensure that they do not include inaccurate information or inflammatory content.
4. Immediately respond to any incidents of bullying or harassment that occur in the classroom during the lesson plan.
5. Refrain from asking students to engage in educational activities that stimulate the roles of perpetrators, targets, or bystanders.
6. Do not single out and prompt Muslim students or students perceived to be Muslim to comment on the attacks.
7. Avoid using language that validates the claims of the 9/11 attackers or associates their acts of mass murder with Islam and Muslims. For example, avoid using inaccurate and inflammatory terms such as “Islamic terrorists,” “jihadists,” or “radical Islamic terrorists.”
8. Include information about the Muslim responses to 9/11 attacks, such as the international expressions of solidarity with America from Muslim-majority nations, the American Muslim leaders who joined President Bush at Washington, DC’s oldest mosque to condemn the attacks, and boxer Muhammad Ali participating in a national televised fundraiser for families of 9/11 victims alongside actor Will Smith.
9. When discussing the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks—the invasion of Afghanistan, the Iraq War, Guantanamo Bay, etc.—also include discussion of the bigotry and hate crimes that impacted Sikh Americans, Muslim Americans, Arab Americans and other minorities in the twenty years since the attack.

Educational Resources about 9/11

I. Lesson Plans

1. “9/11 Anniversary Teaching Guide,” Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility. Aug. 27, 2013. <https://www.morningsidecenter.org/teachable-moment/lessons/911-anniversary-teaching-guide>

II. Educational Videos & Documentaries

1. “A look back at the 9/11 terror attacks.” ABC7 News Bay Area. Sept. 11, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JVPgjIXmZ8>
2. “Look back at how September 11 unfolded.” CNN. Sept. 7 2011. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D60QnpI_xH4
3. “World Trade Center survivors tell of 9/11 escapes.” AFP News Agency. N.d. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t1ABgCneP74>
4. “Muhammad Ali’s Remarks on 9/11 During America: A Tribute to Heroes Telethon,” YouTube. Sep. 21, 2001. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8amctPdACrc>
5. “How 9/11 Shaped the Lives of American Muslims,” PBS News Hour. Sep. 11, 2011.
6. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=32eeDoXTnqw>
7. “Minorities targeted in 9/11 ‘revenge attacks.’” Al Jazeera. September 5 2011. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WmzaVqcxe8>
8. “9/11 Changed Life For American Muslims.” WLWT. September 8 2011. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICLSEHF9Y>
9. “Post 9/11 Detention Of American Muslims.” Journeyman Pictures. January 8 2008. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=54a-nFgmXks>
10. “On the 19th anniversary of 9/11, ask your students: How has the world changed?,” PBS. Sep. 10, 2019. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/daily-videos/since-911-what-do-your-students-know-about-how-the-u-s-has-changed/>

III. Educational Articles

1. “Commemorate 9/11 by Confronting Islamophobia,” Learning for Justice. Sep. 7, 2010. <https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/commemorate-911-by-confronting-islamophobia#>
2. “9/11 at 10: Lessons Learned From Anti-Muslim Haters,” Open Society Foundations. Sep. 1, 2011. <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/911-10-lessons-learned-anti-muslim-haters>
3. “Muslim American Hero of September 11 Remembered,” The Washington File. April 5, 2002. <https://archive.is/20150118011745/http://wfile.ait.org.tw/wf-archive/2002/020415/epf109.htm>
4. “Muslims in America, post 9/11.” APA. September 2011. <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2011/09/muslims>
5. “Hope and Despair: Being Muslim in America After 9/11.” NBC News. September 11 2016. <https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/9-11-anniversary/hope-despair-being-muslim-america-after-9-11-n645451>
6. “How Being Muslim In America Has Changed Since 9/11.” Huffington Post. September 9 2016. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/how-being-muslim-in-america-has-changed-since-911_n_57d1a61ee4b03d2d45992990
7. “Remembering the Muslims who were killed in the 9/11 attacks.” Al Arabiya. September 11 2011. <https://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/09/11/166286>
8. “How 9/11 Caused An Increase In Islamophobic Hate Crimes.” Refinery29. September 11 2020. <https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/2020/09/10019797/islamophobia-after-911-september-11-hate-crimes>
9. “9/11 to now: Ways we have changed,” PBS. September 14, 2011. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/911-to-now-ways-we-have-changed>.
10. “Federal Civil Rights Engagement with Arab and Muslim American Communities,” U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. Sept. 2014. https://www.usccr.gov/pubs/docs/ARAB_MUSLIM_9-30-14.pdf
11. Column: Why educators still need to talk about 9/11 — and Islamophobia,” PBS News Hour. September 11, 2017. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/amp/education/column-educators-still-need-talk-911-islamaphobia>.